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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: MARCH 17, 2009

Summary: Reports and photographs of the countrywide "celebrations" following the much-awaited reinstatement of the deposed judges including Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary dominated headlines in all newspapers on Tuesday. State Department spokesman Robert Wood's remarks that the reinstatement decision "brought Pakistan back from the brink" received extensive coverage. In an exclusive story, the Urdu daily, "Jang," and its sister English newspaper, "The News," quoted President Zardari as saying that "he was never against Justice Iftikhar." Reports of a suicide blast in Rawalpindi killing 11 and injuring more than 25 others were also highlighted. Tehrik Nifaz-i-Shariat Muhammadi (TNSM) chief Sufi Mohammad's warning to judges of Swat "to cease their hearings" as "Sharia courts would start operations in the district" received prominent display.

All major dailies ran analytical editorials on the restoration of the deposed judges by Prime Minister Gilani and its far-reaching implications. Commenting on the "happy ending" of the judicial crisis, the center-right national daily, "The Nation," noted that "this would not have been possible without backdoor attempts by the military establishment and the new U.S. Administration, which had reasons to be wary of increasing polarization in the country." Extolling General Kiyani's position in the crisis, the popular rightist daily, "Ausaf," declared that "this role has absolved the Pakistan Army of the wrongdoings of General Musharraf." Whereas, the mass circulation daily "Jang," opined that now "it is time to deal with issues like poverty, ignorance, unemployment, inflation, and hunger in the country." End Summary.

News Stories

"'Judicial Revolution' Paves Way For Strong Parliament" "Dawn"
(03/17)

"As victors celebrated a judicial revolution that culminated in the restoration of deposed judges on Monday through people's power, the way seemed cleared for one in Parliament as well to empower the legislature. Restoring to Parliament its lost power is likely to be the next focus of political forces whose differences over a two-year-old judicial crisis finally took the matter to the streets."

"Massive Show Of Relief By People" "Dawn" (03/17)

"People belonging to all spheres of life celebrated the restoration of Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry and other deposed judges throughout the country on Monday."

"Reinstatement Decision Sparks Celebration" "Dawn" (03/17)

"Celebrations started outside the official residence of Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry on Monday morning the moment news about his reinstatement spread. A number of people described the development as a step towards establishing people's power, but others termed it the beginning of a real challenge for the judiciary."

"Pakistan Came Back From The Brink: U.S." "Dawn" (03/17)

"The United States said on Monday that the decision to reinstate Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry brought Pakistan back from the brink but declined to take credit for helping defuse a potentially explosive situation. 'This was basically a decision made by Pakistanis for Pakistanis. And they deserve all the credit,' said State Department spokesman Robert Wood."

"No U.S. Pressure: State Department" "Daily Times" (03/17)

"The United States on Monday praised the reinstatement of sacked chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Iftikhar Chaudhry, saying there had been no U.S. pressure on the Pakistani government to do so, AP reported."

"Zardari Says He Was Never Against Justice Iftikhar" "The News" (03/17)

"President Asif Ali Zardari says he was only waiting for the retirement of Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar before restoring Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry as Chief Justice. The President told this newspaper on Monday evening: 'I never said that I was against Justice Iftikhar.'"

"Politics Of Reconciliation To Continue: Gilani" "Dawn" (03/17)

"Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Monday announced reinstatement of deposed Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry and other judges. Mr. Gilani pledged to continue politics of reconciliation."

"U.S., U.K., Others Hail Decision" "The News" (03/17)

"The world powers heaved a sigh of relief as sanity finally prevailed in Pakistan and President Asif Ali Zardari was forced to concede the demands of the people. 'This is a statesmanlike decision taken to defuse a serious confrontation, and the apparent removal of this long-standing national issue is a substantial step towards national reconciliation,' said the U.S. Embassy in a statement."

"From Gilani To Kayani And U.S. To U.K. - All Did Well" "The News" (03/17)

"The historic restoration of deposed Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry in the wee hours on Monday and marathon struggle for the purpose by certain people have brought some distinguished faces to the positive light including Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani and others for playing productive and result-oriented role in the whole endeavor. Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif, distinctive leader of the lawyers' movement Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan Chaudhry, Tehrik-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan, Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Qazi Hussain Ahmad, ANP President Asfandiyar Wali Khan, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Ms. Anne W. Patterson, British High Commissioner Robert E. Brinkley and Saudi Ambassador Ali Saeed Awadh Assirri are conspicuous among such personalities."

"Some In Congress May Not Back Aid" Clinton" "Dawn" (03/17)

"Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told Pakistani leaders that some U.S. lawmakers 'may not feel inclined' to support aid to Islamabad if political chaos continued, a top U.S. official said on Monday. But the official, speaking to reporters on condition of anonymity, said Ms. Clinton presented the issue as a reality rather than a threat in her calls on Saturday to President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani."

"U.S. In Touch With Main Players" "Dawn" (03/16)

"The United States remains heavily involved in resolving the current political crisis in Pakistan, maintaining regular contact with the main players even after the protesters started their long march to Islamabad on Sunday. Throughout the crisis, which intensified after President Asif Ali Zardari dismissed the Punjab government, Washington has maintained a multi-layer involvement with Islamabad."

"Taseer, Malik And Fazl Lead Zardari Astray" "The News" (03/16)

"... As a last resort, Zardari tried to use the American pressure. It was surprising for Zardari that some top U.S. government officials never used any 'pressure' on Nawaz Sharif and they just tried to mediate. Top U.S. government functionaries tried their level best to prevent the PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif from coming out on the roads but they failed. U.S. President's Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke spoke to Nawaz Sharif twice last week and offered his services for mediation with Asif Ali Zardari but the PML-N Quaid never encouraged him. Nawaz Sharif told this scribe that he did not want the Army and the U.S. to interfere in the political affairs of the country and that was why he ignored the offer of the American envoy, but in a polite and friendly way."

"Terrorists Strike Amid Jubilation; 11 Killed" "Dawn" (03/17)

"A suicide bomber hit a crowded bus-stand in Rawalpindi intersection on Monday night killing at least 11 people and injuring more than 25 others. A woman and a child were among those killed and political workers, pedestrians and passengers were injured."

"Swat Sufi Asks Judges To Keep Out Of Courts" "Dawn" (03/17)

"The peace initiative launched by the NWFP government in Swat faced fresh problems on Monday when Tehrik Nifaz-i-Shariat Muhammadi (TNSM) Chief Maulana Sufi Mohammad asked judicial officers to stop coming to courts and said that any further court proceedings would be in violation of the agreement signed by the government."

"Peace Accord Help Restore Normalcy to Bajaur Agency" "The News" (03/17)

"The unilateral ceasefire announcement by Taliban and subsequent agreement between political administration and Mamond tribesmen brought peace back to the volatile Bajaur Agency, prompting the displaced persons to return to their homes."

"U.S. Drone Kills Two In FR Bannu Village" "The News" (03/17)

"Two militants, including a foreigner, were killed when a suspected US spy plane fired two missiles on a hideout in Janikhel area, Frontier Region (FR) Bannu, on Sunday night."

"Militant Torch 30 NATO Vehicles" "Dawn" (03/17)

"Suspected Taliban militants torched 30 vehicles in attack in Peshawar on Monday on a terminal for trucks carrying supplies for NATO forces in Afghanistan. This was the second such attack in two days."

"Kidnappers Of UN Official Set New Deadline" "Dawn" (03/17)

"A group which claims to have kidnapped a UN official warned on Monday if their demands were not met in 48 hours they would not be responsible if anything happened to John Solecki because of 'inaction.'"

"Taliban Reject Dialogue: Report" "Dawn" (03/17)

"The Taliban rejected reports on Monday its leader Mullah Omar was willing to hold peace talks aimed at ending the war in Afghanistan, saying it would continue attacks until all foreign forces withdrew from the country."

"Mullah Omar Backs Afghan Peace Talks" "The News" (03/16)

"Taliban Chief Mullah Omar has given his approval for talks aimed at ending the war in Afghanistan and allowed his representatives to

attend the Saudi-sponsored peace negotiations."

Editorials/Op-eds

"A Happy Ending," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (03/17)

"The lawyers, opposition parties and the civil society at large have wrested victory out of the jaws of defeat. This would not have been possible without backdoor attempts by the military establishment and the new U.S. administration, which had reasons to be wary of increasing polarization in the country."

"Nation Grateful To General Kiyani," an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (03/17)

"Pakistan Army has played an exemplary role in getting resolve the judicial crisis, and this role has absolved the Pak Army of the wrongdoings of General Musharraf."

"Unique Struggle Of Lawyers And Now Harsh Test," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (03/17)

"Indeed, it is a great achievement of the lawyers' fraternity, political parties, media, and the people of Pakistan that their struggle for the restoration of the judiciary has succeeded. And now every Pakistani is right to think that it is time to deal with issues like poverty, ignorance, unemployment, inflation, and hunger in the society."

"In Our Own Hands," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/17)

"We frequently persuade ourselves that all decision-making in the country lies outside realms controlled by people and it is indeed Washington or other powers, both internal and external, who dictate terms to us. The momentous events of early Monday morning should be enough to persuade us that we, as citizens, have the power to alter the destiny of our country and its people. The strength to do so lies in our own hands. Using that force is a matter of choice."

"The Road Ahead," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (03/17)

"Chief Justice Chaudhry will feel the pressure to be the people's champion. That may well be necessary in certain circumstances, but the Supreme Court must not become a policymaker. If, for example, the people don't like the government's food or fiscal policy, the corrective measure is to vote it out in the next election. Judicial intervention may be popular, but what is popular at any given time isn't what is best from the perspective of systemic stability."

"Life After The Long March," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (03/17)

"Life after the Long March will hopefully see restoration of the economy that was severely damaged by the political instability radiating from the campaign. Once the result of the review petition has brought about a further thawing of the situation, it will be time to take a serious look at the problem of terrorism and the battle against it that we are not winning."

"Triumph Of Justice," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (03/17)

"The reinstatement of Chief Justice Iftikhar is only the first step towards ensuring the independence of judiciary in Pakistan. History shows that the judiciary here has always been under tremendous pressure from an all powerful executive to do its bidding.... There can be no democracy without justice in its broadest sense.... Let this triumph of justice not be a fleeting one. Let it be the starting point to realize the vision of a democratic, just, progressive and prosperous Pakistan."

"Victory Of Democracy," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist

English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (03/17)

"The historic statement of the Prime Minister totally transformed the political atmosphere and provided instant relief to the agitating people and their silent supporters and sympathizers. The amicable resolution of the long drawn issue bears testimony to the fact that the country has the inherent capability and strength to absorb such shocks and move forward."

"Success Of Lawyers Movement: Victory Of People," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (03/16)

"PML-N Chief Nawaz Sharif's decision to defy restriction and lead the long march was a turning point that destroyed government's strategy and helped the Prime Minister and the establishment arrive at the decision to reinstate deposed judges.... This is no one's defeat and is the victory of the people, lawyers, civil society and democratic and political forces. Had the government made the decision earlier, it would have saved the country from the political and economic losses that it suffered."

"Restoration Of Deposed Judges: The Need To Mend Broken Alliances And Links Also," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 100,000) (03/17)

"It would not be wrong to term the Prime Minister's statement a welcome change in the country. This announcement will not only fulfill the longstanding dream of independence of judiciary but also usher in an atmosphere of reconciliation in the country that will strengthen democracy...."

"Nobody's Victory, Nobody's Loss - Only The Nation Is Victorious," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (03/17)

"The people are rejoicing at the PM's announcement; and indeed they should celebrate as for the last two years they were gripped by an emotional and psychological turmoil that had a negative impact on their social and economic life.... The people will now be able to focus on India which is building dams on our rivers in violation of the Indus Water Treaty."

"League Rally," an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (circ. 5000) (03/17)

"The restoration of Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and his colleagues proves that the nation will not let the state institutions take actions that violate the law and constitution. Lawyers, civil society, political workers and leaders have struggled for two years and defeated dictatorial decisions. The reinstatement is a victory of the constitution and the nation. This victory proves that democratic thought is budding in Pakistan in a new and assertive manner."

"End To Political Crisis," an editorial in the Hyderabad based Sindhi Daily "Kawish" (cir. 105,000) (03/17)

"Prime Minister's announcement to reinstate the deposed judges has brought political tension and conflict to an end, and the crisis seems to have been resolved. We understand that both the government and the opposition contributed in intensifying the tension in the country, now efforts should be focused to make the democratic system successful."

"Late But Finally Justice Restored," an editorial in the Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" (cir. 3,000) (03/17)

"The government's decision to restore the judges might be considered by some quarters as its retreat, but we believe that there is no harm in such retreat that saves the nation from destruction. One really regrets that had this decision been taken a year ago, much time and energies would have been saved."

"Army Follows 'Kayani Model'," news analysis by Jehangir Karamat in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (03/17)

"Pakistan moved towards a precipice, teetered on its edge and moved back. Internationally there was a collective sigh of relief that a disaster had been averted.... Now democracy stands strengthened and the roadmap to a shift of the power center to the people is clear. This opens a new chapter in Pakistan's history as hope and optimism pervade the environment after the gloom generated by the deadlock.... This time the military followed what must be called the 'Kayani Model' - invisible but around, fully informed and acting through well timed and effective influence in the right quarter."

"Victory For Democracy," an op-ed by Dr. Tariq Rahman in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (03/17)

"The significance of the judges' restoration lies not only in democratic forces having won. The principle of defying dictators has also received a big boost."

"Gradual Withdrawal Of Troops From Swat," an editorial note in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (03/17)

"In the past, the local Taliban always complained that the government did not honor its commitments, but this time both sides of the peace deal are serious to fulfill their responsibilities. So, the government should start pulling out troops from the Swat valley progressively to demonstrate that it still stands with its commitments."

"Another Drone Attack," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (03/17)

"American predator drone attack in Jan Khaili, Bannu killed five and wounded many.... This was the second drone attack on our territory in the last one week and, ironically, the government is not even keeping up the facade of protesting against this open U.S. aggression.... Suicide attacks and terrorism will continue if American drone attacks continued."

"Drone Attacks And U.S. Policy," an editorial note in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (03/17)

"The U.S. continuous drone attacks on Pakistani border areas is a legacy of the Bush administration, and the change in the White House did not affect the U.S. foreign policies. If the new U.S. administration is desirous to resolve the Afghanistan issue, it must not overlook the Pakistan interests, and its all-out cooperation in the ongoing war on terror."

"End Hafiz Saeed's Detention," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (03/17)

"The detention of Jamaat-ud-Dawa Ameer Hafiz Saeed and four other leaders have been extended.... Jamaat-ud-Dawa has nothing to do with Lashkar-i-Taiba. The government should honorably release Hafiz Saeed.... Has he been detained at the U.S. behest? If Pakistan is a sovereign state than why can't we stop appeasing America?"
Patterson